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RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI 7280
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2640
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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2497
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RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 BEIJING 001520

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

State for EAP/CM - SFlatt, JHajian
State for EEB/CIP - SFlynn, FSaeed, DGross
USTR for Awinter, JMcHale, TWineland, AMain
Commerce for MAC
Commerce for ITA - IKasoff, NMelcher
DOJ for CCIPS - MDubose and SChembtob
FBI for LBryant
State for White House OSTP Ambassador Richard
Russell
NSC for Melissa Hathaway

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: "ESCORT OF THE YOUTH FLOWERS" - CHINA SEEKS
TO MANDATE INTERNET FILTERING SOFTWARE IN NEW
COMPUTERS

Ref: Beijing 1206

This cable is sensitive but unclassified. Please
handle accordingly.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: China's Ministry of Industry and
Information Technology (MIIT) on May 22 mandated
that all computers sold in China, whether imported
or manufactured domestically, be pre-installed with
"Green Dam - Escort of the Youth Flowers" Internet
filtering software effective July 1, 2009. With
little more than 30 days advance notice, the
announcement offers few details of the technical
implementation and raises transparency and market
access concerns for U.S. companies. Compliance with
this new requirement would in essence make foreign
businesses complicit with China's censorship regime,
and exposes foreign computers to potential
cybersecurity vulnerabilities. Emboffs will meet
with industry representatives on June 8 to hear
their response and proposed actions. There appears
to be early consensus to focus first on delaying the
implementation deadline and pursue discussions with
the Chinese government. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) China's Ministry of Industry and
Information Technology (MIIT) on May 22 issued
Circular No. 226, a document mandating the
installation of "Green Dam - Escort of the Youth
Flowers" Internet filtering software on all new
computers, imported or made domestically, that are
sold in China beginning July 1, 2009. According to
company documents, media reports, and conversations
with Beijing-based trade association U.S.
Information Technology Office (USITO), the software
is a commercial application jointly developed by: (1)
a Beijing company that provides text and image
filtering technology for China's Great Firewall, and
(2) a Zhengzhou company with ties to a Peoples'

Liberation Army University. Functioning much like anti-virus software, the application regularly connects to the Internet to download a current list of what content to block.

Protecting the Youth Flowers

13. (SBU) The Circular says that central government agencies including MIIT, the Ministry of Finance, and the Civilization office of the CPC Central Committee have licensed the software to leverage the ongoing "Special Campaign to Restore the Internet from a State of Vulgarly" (see reftel) and to "build a green, healthy, and harmonious network environment and to avoid unhealthy information on the Internet from influencing and hurting the youth." According to a May announcement by MIIT, Green Dam filtering software has already been installed in 2.17 million primary and middle schools in China -- 80 percent of the nation's total. The mandate for all schools to install the software, including detailed instructions on the proper downloading and installation of the software, was communicated on April 1 in a joint notice from MIIT, the Ministries of Education and Finance, and the State Council Information Office.

U.S. Industry Concerns

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14. (SBU) Multinational computer manufacturers Apple, Dell, and HP, and software maker Symantec told USITO they did not learn of the Green Dam requirement until May 26, little more than one month prior to the proposed July 1 implementation date. HP and Dell said they had been in contact with MIIT's Software Service Department about the Green Dam concept in mid-May, but at that point MIIT suggested the program would be voluntary. The companies said they did not receive a copy of the Circular on May 22, the publication date printed on the document itself. Despite commitments to the United States at the SED to publish for comment all policy documents affecting economic issues, China has still not posted the notice on any government website.

15. (SBU) U.S. companies have significant political concerns that complying with the Chinese requirements to install Green Dam software would make them appear complicit with Chinese Government censorship. In addition, with only 30 days to test the software and prepare for the implementation of the measure, U.S. businesses are worried about apparent technical problems. For example, online blog reports and initial compatibility tests by U.S. companies report problems, raising concerns about who will support users if the software causes their computers to crash, for example. Furthermore, the software is not currently available for Apple and Linux operating systems. While the Circular announces that the government will "provide free usage to all of society" for one year, manufacturers are concerned about who will cover the installation costs, implementation and customer service costs, and licensing fees beyond the first year.

16. (SBU) China's proposal to enforce the use of filtering software violates technology neutrality principles, reduces incentives for commercial innovation in the marketplace, and in many cases causes redundancies with commercial software already offered for sale with many computers. By maintaining a potentially constant connection with

the Internet to download software updates, the software conceivably provides Chinese censors a finer tool with which to monitor user behavior and block content. It also creates vulnerabilities in the form of a "back door" that could expose computers to covert control by third parties, malicious attacks, or spying.

Strong Support from Government

¶7. (SBU) Based on its meetings with member companies and with MIIT, USITO tells us there is great political pressure within the Chinese government to implement the Green Dam program. This is attributed partly to support for the new software's installation by Politburo Standing Committee Member Li Changchun, who has authority over the regime's propaganda system.

¶8. (SBU) Following is an unofficial translation of the MIIT circular prepared by the U.S. Information Technology Office:

BEGIN TEXT

Ministry of Industry and Information Technology

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Circular

MIIT Software [2009] No. 226

Notice Concerning the Computer Pre-Installation of Green Internet Filter Software

To Relevant Agencies/Companies:

In order to build a green, healthy, and harmonious network environment and to avoid unhealthy information on the Internet from influencing and hurting the youth, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), the Communist Party of China Culture and Civilization Office, and the Ministry of Finance (MOF), in accordance with the relevant requirements of P.R.C Government Procurement Law, have applied central finance funds to purchase the rights for one year usage and related services of the "Green Dam - Escort of the Youth Flowers" green Internet filter software (hereafter referred as "Green Dam" software) to provide free usage to all of society. Through general testing and pilot project application, this software product has proven to be able to effectively filter unhealthy text and image content on the internet, thus this software already possesses the conditions necessary to be pre-installed by computer manufacturers.

In order to build upon the progress made during the implementation of the "Special Campaign to Restore the Internet from a State of Vulgarly," persist in a combination of "punish and prevent," realistically protect the healthy upbringing of underage youth, and push forward in the healthy and orderly development of the Internet, in accordance with the general nation-wide deployment of the "Special Campaign to Restore the Internet from a State of Vulgarly", MIIT hereby notifies the specific requirements for the computer pre-installation of green Internet filtering software as follows:

¶1. All computers produced and sold within Chinese territory shall pre-install the latest available version of the "Green Dam" software; imported computers shall pre-install the latest available version of the "Green Dam" software before they are

sold in China.

12. "Green Dam" software shall be pre-installed in the computer's hard disk or the DVD included in the package. It shall be installed in the restore partition and restore disk of the computer as the backup file.

13. "Green Dam" software shall adopt active measures to support the computer manufacturing companies' pre-installation related work.

14. Computer manufacturing companies shall complete relevant testing work for pre-installing "Green Dam" software before the end of June 2009. Computers manufactured or sold after July 1, 2009 shall be pre-installed with "Green Dam" software.

15. Computer manufacturers and "Green Dam" software providers shall report to the Software Service Department of MIIT the previous month's computer sales volume on a monthly basis throughout 2009. In 2010, the annual sales data of the preceding year

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shall be reported no later than the end of February.

For those who do not pre-install after the stated deadline, those who submit delayed or falsified reports, or those who refuse to report, MIIT will order them to take due make-up or correction measures.

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology
May 19, 2009

(Official Chop)

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The Administration Department of MIIT

Released on May 22nd, 2009

END TEXT

Comment

19. (SBU) We will meet with USITO staff and industry representatives on June 8 for their more detailed response to the Green Dam mandate. Multinational manufacturers clearly face major technical challenges to properly test and deploy software within 30 days, a requirement that me be impossible to meet. That notwithstanding, the political ramifications of deploying content filtering software paid for by the Chinese government are even more serious and complex. USITO's parent companies will reportedly seek to brief Washington DC-based officials early in the week of June 8. We will continue to report on this matter as it develops.
End Comment.

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